



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

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# News Release

## **EL PASO MAN SENTENCED IN CIGARETTE SMUGGLING CASE**

***Multi-state criminal enterprise deprived federal, state governments of \$9.2 million in revenue***

EL PASO—A federal judge sentenced an El Paso man Wednesday for his participation in a criminal multi-million dollar enterprise that involved smuggling cigarettes into the United States.

U.S. District Court Judge Philip Martinez sentenced Fernando Ortiz to 366 days in federal prison. Martinez also ordered Ortiz to pay \$1.9 million in restitution.

The 33-year-old was the first of several co-defendants named back in December 2003 in a 92-count indictment to plead guilty.

Jorge Abraham, 35, a U.S. citizen and head of the international cigarette smuggling network, pleaded guilty in December to “Conspiracy to Smuggle Cigarettes into the United States,” “Traffic in Contraband Cigarettes,” and “Traffic in Counterfeit Cigarettes.” Sentencing is pending.

The retail value of the counterfeit cigarettes that Abraham’s enterprise smuggled, diverted, transported and distributed between September 2001 and December 2002 was about \$5.4 million. The total loss of revenue to the federal government and state governments of New York, California and Texas was about \$9.2 million.

Also on Wednesday, Timothy J. Farnham, a U.S. citizen, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court to Count One of the 92-count indictment. Farnham, 39, pleaded guilty to having knowledge of the actual commission of “Conspiracy to Smuggle Cigarettes into the United States” and “Trafficking in Contraband Cigarettes,” violations of Title 18 USC Sections 371, 545, 2342 (a) and 2320(a).

Farnham is the 10th co-defendant to plead guilty to Count One of the 92-count indictment. Farnham is awaiting sentencing.

Judge Martinez is scheduled to sentence the following co-defendants as follows:

Jan. 12- Anthony Leone, 51, of Salamanca, New York  
Feb. 17 - Dean Miller, 48, of San Diego, Calif.  
Feb. 24 - Antonio Aranda, 58, of El Paso  
March 1 - Saul Iglesias, 40, of El Paso  
March 2 - Peter Pembleton, 44, Salamanca, New York  
March 8 - Ignacio Abraham, 71, of El Paso

A sentencing date for Felipe Castañeda, 32, of El Paso, has not yet been set.

The following co-defendants are set to plead guilty also in Judge Martinez' courtroom as follows:

Jan. 11 – Scott Snyder, 42, of Irving, New York  
Jan. 19 – Donald Deland, 43, of Irving, New York  
Jan. 26 - Robert Tarantino, 64, of Freehold, New Jersey

The ICE-led investigation revealed that Jorge Abraham was receiving counterfeit and contraband cigarettes from various companies in Miami, Florida and El Paso, as well as manufacturers in Taiwan and China.

The total amount of counterfeit cigarettes that the Abraham organization distributed was at least 2,313 cases. The retail value of these counterfeit cigarettes was about \$5.4 million. The total loss of revenue to the federal government and the state governments of New York, California and Texas was about \$9.2 million. A total of at least 5,616 cases of cigarettes were ultimately illegally supplied to various distributors in the United States. The government seized the remainder of the cases of cigarettes.

A 92-count indictment returned Dec. 10, 2003 charged all of the co-defendants. Each co-defendant was charged for their involvement and active participation in the smuggling, facilitation and distribution of counterfeit and contraband cigarettes, as well as for conspiring with Abraham.

On Jan. 28, 2004, ICE special agents assisted by other law enforcement agencies arrested several of the co-defendants throughout the United States.

# ICE #

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